JAMES W. DEAN'S FILM REVIEWS

Frank and Fair Comments on Latest Productions From Moving Picture Studios

By JAMES W. DEAN

NEW YORK, Dec. 9.—Well, well So they say Charlie Chaplin and Pola Negri are betrothed

Charlie now has been reported engaged as often as the Prince of Wales —and to as many different girls.

The rumor of Charlie's engagement to Negri is the only one in which this writer has taken any stock.

Since the divorce of Chaplin and Mildred Harris the comedian has been reported engaged to at least six girls. In almost every case the girl's name thus was given a prominence that it would not have otherwise enjoyed. Linking of their names with one so renowned as Chaplin's was fat stuff for the press agents.

Chaplin is a gallant man. His popularity was not hurt by these announcements and although he may have resented the intrusion of gossipmongers into his private affairs he was too chivalrous to deny openly the reported engagements to the various young ladies.

With Pola Negri the case it utterly different. She is famed on two continents. Her star is already hung in the cinema heavens. It will shine brightly enough for her without the reflected lustre of Chaplin's name.

Chaplin holds her in great esteem. When he returned from Europe a year ago after he had met Negri for the first time, I asked him what he thought of her. His face brightened at the mention of her name and without a moment's hesitation he answered:

"I think Pola Negri has the most vivid striking personality of any woman I met in all of Europe."

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Some people are making much of the fact that when Negri met Chaplin upon her arrival in Hollywood, she extended both hands to him. The last time I met Harold Lloyd I grabbed him by both hands and I haven't heard a bit of gossip about it as yet.

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THE MOVIE GRAB BAG

Gladys Walton will be starred in a screen version of "The Chicken That Came Home to Roost," a story by Frederic Arnold Kummer, appearing in a November magazine.

Antonio Moreno will be Mary Miles Minter's leading man in "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine."

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Milton Sills and Anna Q. Nilsson will play the leads in Maurice Tourneur's "Isle of Dead Ships."

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"The Flying Dutchman," a foreign film, has been revised to synchronize with the score of Wagner's opera.

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BEHIND THE SCREEN

Joseph DeGrasse is a movie director despite himself. He was a paint boy in a Boston theatre. He looked down from the heights of that artistic position in disdain upon mere actors. As he grew older he developed a resemblance to Edwin Booth. He heard an actor remark on this resemblance and two years later he played Hamlet. Then he toured the country in Shakespearian repertoire. He met Charles Ray when the latter was chore boy around the opera house at Needles, Cal. Later he gave Charlie a chance to speak a line. Now he has directed Ray in four pictures, the most recent of which is "A Tailor-Made Man." But DeGrasse would rather act than direct.

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Saw John Barrymore in "Hamlet' The finest performance I ever did see . . . Saw "Anna Ascends" in which Alice Brady did not ascend to any great height as a screen actress. . . . Saw "Virtue?" The question mark belongs there. It's probably the weakest stage play of the season. . . . Saw "The Pride of Palomar," in which Peter B. Kyne spreads anti-Jap propaganda . . . Saw "Dr. Jack" in which film Harold Lloyd spreads the doctrine of happiness as a cure for physical ills . . . Saw "Ebb Tide" in which film Raymond Hatton and George Fawcett carry off acting honors . . . Saw Raymond Hatton in the flesh. "I've been a king in so many films that I'd gladly be a knave for a while," he said. . . . Saw Violet Heming, Dennis King, Helen Westley and Percy Waram in "The Lucky One," a play by A. A. Milne which falls below his usual standard. It is hardly worth the sincere attention the Theatre Guild gives it . . . Saw Erno Rapee, musical director at the Capitol, conduct Richard Strauss' "Ein Heldenleben," for its first presentation in any American theatre. Yet some people still talk about "low brow" movie theatres!!! Saw Jobyna Howland in "The Texas Nightingale," Zoe Aiken's play in which a woman still seeks romance after her fourth marriage!!! Saw a cop stop a closed van on which read a sign "Works of Fine Art Removed," The van contained beer kegs!!?$¾--?;;;!

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George Walsh is cast for an important role in Hugo Ballin's "Vanity Fair" This will be the first film in which Walsh has ever played a straight dramatic role. Having won considerable fame as an athlete at Georgetown and Fordham, he is always called upon to do acrobatic stunts no matter what his role in a picture.

Walsh was good enough as a ball player with the Brooklyn National league team. He was stroke on the New York Athletic club's champion eight-oar crew. He played basketball and football and was on the swimming diving and track teams of Fordham and Georgetown. It is on record at Georgetown that he booted several drop kicks 75 yards.

It seems that in Walsh the movies have the champion athlete of America.

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Monte Blue will play Dr. Kennicott in the film version of "Main Street." Louise Fazenda has been cast as "Bee" the Swedish maid.

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Marie Prevost, Harry Meyers, Helen Ferguson, Irene Rich, Pat O'Malley, Frank Keenan and Miss Dupont have been cast for the film version of "Brass."

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BEHIND THE SCREEN

Tom J. Geraghty was managing editor of a paper in Rushville, Ind., at 19, but with James Whitcomb Riley, Booth Tarkington, Charles Major, Kin Hubbard and other Hoosier lights to fire him, he became ambitious to be an author. A weekly magazine published one of his stories and Sam Blythe wrote to ask him what he was doing on a small paper. Tom immediately jumped to New York where he worked as reporter for several years. Then he wrote comedies for Sidney Drew and his wife. Famous Players sent him to Hollywood. Later he became a freelance writer and did originals and adaptions for many of the leading stars. Now he is supervisor of the eastern studio of Famous Players.

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Many consider "The Toll of the Sea" a photoplay of unusual merit because it is all in colors and the color job has been done a bit better than heretofore.

To me the film possesses unusual merit because it has a real Chinese for heroine instead of some Caucasian girl with her eyes and imagination stretched out of shape. Anna May Wong is a better Chinese actress than Mary Pickford in "Madame Butterfly" or Constance Talmadge in "East is West." Her parents must be given due credit for that.

And another unusual feature of this film is that it has the unhappy ending that its plot predicates. There has been no attempt by the producers to offer the conventional happy ending as a sentimental sop to the spiritual cowards who won't take their romance unless it's sugar coated.

"The Toll of the Sea," is much like "Madame Butterfly." A Chinese girl loves a white man. He returns to America without her. Then he goes back to China with his white bride. The Chinese girl surrenders his baby to his new bride and then walks out into the sea.

She had found the white man cast upon the shore. A Chinese legend holds that the sea demands tribute for each good or beautiful thing it yields. The girl pays the tribute according to the legend.

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The movies need several things to make them better. I believe that they do not need tinted films or voice. The photoplay right now contains all of the essential elements for the development of a distinctive form of expression.

The evolution of the photoplay must be along the lines of simplification. The things that detract from the telling of the story, the idle words in subtitles, flashbacks to show fantastic incidents that have no bearing on the plot, insincere stuff designed to play on emotions not touched by the story itself—all these must be eradicated.

Pantomime is the chief stock in trade of the screen player. (N. B. See Charlie Chaplin.) Color and voice can be expressed in black and white action.

No mechanical voice will ever be a faithful counterpart of the human voice. No artificial color will ever be as beautiful as natural color. God didn't plan the universe that way. If man can reproduce natural color and natural voice he is well on the way to the manufacture of robots.

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Beatrice Bentley makes her film debut as the white bride in "The Toll of the Sea." She is a beautiful girl. For one unaccustomed to the camera she seems quite at ease. Her cinema future appears very promising.

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And speaking of simplicity—I believe that William DeMille is the only director of the day who has a practical idea of that word's meaning. William DeMille averages only 1000 feet of excess film on the six and seven reel pictures he makes. Other directors waste 50 to 200 times that amount.

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And getting back to "The Toll of the Sea," again—criticism of its color work naturally becomes comparison with "The Glorious Adventure," the Lady Diana Manners film produced in color. Tinting of "The Toll of the Sea," more nearly stimulates nature. It is easier on the eyes that the British film.

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Carter DeHaven is directing himself in "The Waggin' Tail."

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"Long Skirts," is Fatty Karr's next comedy.

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Louis Wolheim, the "Hairy Ape," is the featured player in "Love's Old Sweet Song."

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Grace Darmond is to be featured in "Flesh," an original story by Rupert Julian.

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The short subject films point the way to the feature photoplays. The two-reel comic has always been in advance of the multiple-reel photoplay in the development of a distinctive form of expression. Now other short films, such as scenics, animated drawings and polite comedies, are showing more originality in subject and treatment than the bigger films.

These remarks arise from several hours devoted to previewing some new short subjects.

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Earl Hurd shows in a new series of one-reelers what novel effects can be gained with a combination of animated drawings and photography. I saw "Railroading." That is a whimsical tale of a boy making a movie by using drawn figures of a boy and dog as his actors. These figures cut-up in a toy train and a real cat anddon a little chicken become involved in the plot.

At first this all seemed utter nonsense, but on reflection it appears that Hurd put himself in the attitude of a little child and wove a tale such as might be sketched on the walls of a nursery. It is a beautiful bit of imagery when considered in that light.

Max Fleascher in his "Out of the Inkwell" series employes the same scheme and is a bit more adroit with his work than Hurd. However, he doesn't look at the picture he creates through the eyes of a child.

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Robert Bruce also resorts to the fancies of a story-teller in "A Natural Born Liar," the latest of his scenics. In this he introduces beautiful panoramas by having a nomad of the north tell about his various adventures.

Thus the camera shows a mirage of the desert, a lake in which the smallest trout is two feet nine inches long and an ocean in the mountains. The last episode presents the upper surface of a mighty cloud which breaks upon the mountain side like the ocean upon a rocky shore.

These scenics of nature in unusual circumstances appear stranger than fiction, but Bruce introduces fiction to the story. The traveler visits a "blind spot" in the woods. In this spot everything becomes invisible in broad daylight.

Critics in England have acclaimed such Bruce pictures as these as the most artistic yet produced in America.

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Baby Peggy is being starred in a series of fairy-stories, the latest of which is "Little Red Riding Hood." I have not seen this film, but I have seen Baby Peggy and I've read "Little Red Riding Hood" several times. The film promises something far different than has yet been screened. It should suggest to some producer the filming of "Alice in Wonderland" in a very pretentious manner. That story could be better told on the screen than in a book. It would give the screen ample opportunity to show the vast descriptive powers of the camera. It would make a more unique film than "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari."

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Lyman Howe is making a series he calls "hodge-podge." That is an apt name for the films. They consist in the main of trick stuff in line drawings. In that they show little originality. The best part of the film is in the photographed section in which he shows such natural drama as the capture of sea elephants. However, Howe seems to be evolving a plan of diversified entertainment in which a variety of things may be shown in one unity. He has not yet developed the idea of its fullest possibilities.

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Some progress, of course, has been shown in the bigger pictures of the past few months. "Rabin Hood," "Manslaughter" and Nazimova's "Salome" are technically the best films yet made.

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Eugene Walter and Charles Mortimer Peck have effected an alliance to create original screen stories.

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John S. Robertson will direct Richard Barthelmess in "The Bright Shawl."

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Frank Mayo, Richard Dix, Claire Windsor and Lew Cody have been cast for Rupert Hughes' film version of his "Souls for Sale."

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Margaret Leahy comes from London to became a film actress. Selected by Norma Talmadge from among 80,000 contestants she is looked upon by the British as their first representative in American films.

Margaret Leahy is 20. She is five feet, five inches tall. She has dark blue eyes and light, wavy hair. She is the only child of a London couple who call her "Bubbles." Norma Talmadge says she has a perfect film face.

"I'm Irish and proud of it," says Miss Leahy. She talks with her hands and eyes, as well as with her lips.

"My first recollection is of a pretty dress," the new film actress says. "By the time I was eight I was quite a tomboy. At that age I would rather climb a tree than play with dolls. I used to box with daddy until both our faces smarted.

"When I was 18 I set up a costume shop and designed gowns and then acted as the model for them. However, I have always been very romantic. I like best the old, dreamy music even though I do like to dance to the 'goey' music of today. My pet play is 'The Maid of the Mountains' and no story can quite compare with 'Daddy Longlegs.' On the screen I like comedies best."

Miss Leahy's mother has accompanied her to America. She has relatives here whom she will visit before beginning her work in "Within the Law" which will star Norma Talmadge.

And, fellows, here was her answer to the last question, "No, I'm not engaged. I haven't even thought of anyone as yet."

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Peggy O'Neill is a new American screen actress. That may not be her real name—it sounds like the name of a popular song. A native of Iowa, she was educated at Stanford and Northwestern universities and then took up chautauqua work. Then she appeared in Shakespeare with the Avon Players three seasons. And then she married and quit acting. Her husband moved to Los Angeles and she played character bits in feature pictures until Jack White saw her and cast her in the Mermaid comedies. She will be seen in "Casey Jones, Jr."

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Victor Seastrom, director, and George Ekman, star, are coming to America to make three pictures. Seastrom directed and starred in "The Stroke of Midnight," one of the most artistic pictures ever made.

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Joseph Schildkraut and his father, Rudolph Schildkraut, called by many the world's leading character actor, are to appear in a film called "The Dance of Life," written by Eve Unsell and Joseph Rothman. Miss Unsell will supervise the production of the picture. Joseph Schildkraut gained fame on the American stage in "Lilliom" and on the screen in "Orphans of the Storm."

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CUT! CUT! CUT!

Louis J. Gasnier is making a sequel to "Rich Men's Wives" called "Poor Men's Wives." Barbara LaMarr, David Butler, Richard Tucker and Zazu Pitts have the leading roles.

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"Money, Love and the Woman" is the title of a new John M. Stahl picture. Sounds like "Wine, Woman and Song."

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Fay Tincher has returned to the screen after an absence of two years. She plays opposite Lewis Sargent in a Universal comedy.

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Bryant Washburn has supplanted Antonio Moreno in the title role of "Rupert of Hentzau."

Colleen Moore and James Mc... are to play the leads in "The ... Commandment," a Fannie Hurst... being filmed by Franke Borza...

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"The Sheriff of Sunshine Val... to be filmed at Laredo, Tex., ... the auspices of the Kiwanis cl...

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"Mam'selle Midnight," by E... Goulding, will be Mae Murray's ... after "Jazzmania."

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BEHIND THE SCREEN

Rupert Hughes writes, adapts, directs, cuts and titles his own ... as you probably know. Born in ... caster, Mo., in 1872, he grad... from Western Reserve in 18... took a master's degree at Yale th... year. Then he went to New Yo... in succession became a reporte... sistant editor of several mag... short story writer, novelist, ... critic and composer and dra... His most famous movie is pr... "The Old Nest." Hughes does ... of his work in the wee small ... It would be unusual for you ... him at any time without a big...

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VARIETY OFFERED BY MANY NEW PL...

By JAMES W. DEAN

NEW YORK—There is n... if not variety in this s... stage program. Jane Cowl w... starred in "Romeo and Juliet" ... same time that Arthur Hopkin... sents Ethel Barrymore in the ... piece. "Liza," a musical play in ... negroes show the native rhyth... their feet attracts almost as m... John Barrymore in "Hamlet."

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The event of the present week ... introduction of Charles B. D... ham's musical comedy, "Bunch ... Judy." Each season Dillingham ... on a musical play which run... months. "Bunch and Judy" ... probably run for many month... cause Fred and Adele Astaire ... in it. Grace Hayes sings the be... songs on Broadway and the Six ... Brothers play their saxaphones ... though Jerome Kern wrote the ... it is not of high standard. Tha... edy is largely slap-stick stuff by ... ny and Ray Dooley. The cho... the most brilliantly dressed ... season.

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Realism is carried to the Nth ... in Wil Page's, "The Bootle... This loosely constructed play ... probably prove popular with so... cause it is a bitter arraignm... prohibition. Page has been so h... to charge prohibition commiss... enforcement officers, judges, ... men, indeed almost everyone co... ed with enforcement of the eigh... amendment with graft. The ... quotes Patrick Henry's famous ... "If this be treason, make the m... it."

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Another mystery melodrama ... sented in "It is the Law" by ... L. Rice. It hardly measures ... "The Last Warning," "The Bat," ... Cat and the Canary," and "W... ing Wires," but still it is myster... odrama and that sort of ent... ment which is proving most pro... this season.

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In the courtyard of the ca... Canossa, Henry IV stood three ... the cold in January, 1077, bare... and bareheaded, waiting for th... to remove a sentence of excom... cation.